



rewrite

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Book 5: Order Up! (Part II)

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⌚»★«⌚ Chapter 1: A Strange New World ⌚»★«⌚

Nothing. Jess only saw nothing but a strange, blue void. They had just entered the strange portal; the same one that the Blaze Rods used to escape from after stealing their flint and steel. Now, they had to chase them down to not only recollect their stolen items, but also make sure they do not do any harm.

Finally, the blue void started to fade. Instead of landing onto solid land right away, she found herself free falling through the air. It was only for a split second yet this was enough to erupt fear within her and she screamed, the rush of wind blowing against her.

When she landed onto solid ground, she stumbled a little, bumping into someone who was standing in front of her. The person, not expecting this, ended up losing their balance. She didn't recognize who it was until they yelped as they began to fall off the island. She gazed up and saw that it was Ivor.

"WhoaWhoaWhoaWhoa!" Ivor panicked, his dark eyes widening in fear.

Luckily, Jess was able to act quickly, grabbing his hand to prevent him from falling. "Don't worry! I've got you!" She tried to assure him but she struggled getting him back onto the island. Not only was he extremely heavy, she was still trying to process where they were. She was never fond of Portals for that exact reason. They were so disorienting.

Nikki rushed in to help and Zephyr flew up, grabbing Ivor by the back of his collar. Together, the sisters and EnderBat were able to pull him back onto the island safely. Once they were able to rest, they breathed heavily; the sisters because of their exhaustion and Ivor because of the fear of nearly losing his life.

"..You're surprisingly heavy!" Jess panted, gazing at Ivor.

Ivor was able to steady his breathing a little though he was still panting. "I am.. the proportionate weight for my height.. thank you very much!" He huffed, annoyed.

As everyone else tried to figure out where they were, Lukas did his best to comfort Ivor, gently rubbing his back. "There you go. Easy now." He consoled, however the brewer simply pushed him away.

"Yes, thank you, thank you," he scowled, crossing his arms. "Yes.. definitely don't want to fall down there."

Jesse kneeled by the edge, hoping to see anything that would lead them somewhere. Maybe some sort of civilization or best of yet; the Blaze Rods. He was left disappointed when he saw nothing. It was just them. No civilization. No leads. No Blaze Rods.

Mini was holding onto Maggie for support. She seemed pretty freaked out, taking in deep breaths to try and calm her nerves. Maggie did her best to calm her down, however her efforts were futile.

"Where the hell are we?!" Mini whimpered.

"On a floating dirt island. In the middle of nowhere," Maggie replied, placing a hand on her hip as she kept her other arm wrapped around Mini's shoulder. "Any idea where to go?"

Jesse didn't answer as he slowly stood up, staring at the emptiness all around them. "I dunno, there's nothing but sky down there!" He replied. "It's all just.. empty.. sky."

"This is unbelievable! I've traveled all over our world, to nearly every corner, and there has always been land or water beneath me!" Ivor complained. "You could just fall forever.. and ever.. and ever-."

"No!" Mini cried, now even more frightened than before. "Please don't say that!"

Ivor's eyes widened as he remembered her fear of heights. He felt a twinge of guilt washing over him. "Oh, Mini, I almost forgot. My apologies!" He apologized.

"It's fine, let's talk about anything else that doesn't include falling!" Mini replied. She tried to push her fear aside, trying to think of a plan. "So out of all places to teleport to, the portal decided to teleport us in the air?"

"Maybe the portal is beneath us?" Maggie suggested. "I could blow this place sky high to check!"

Jess cringed slightly. "Let's-.. not do that," she said politely, not wanting to add more stress on their shoulders. "How about we try to see if we could find a way out of here instead?"

Without another word, everyone, including Mini, began to search the small island, hoping to find a way off or at least a clue that might lead them to the Blaze Rods. Zephyr began searching too, flying off the edge to look for anything that might lead them somewhere.

After a moment, he spotted an island below them. The island was much way bigger than the one they were on and on the island seemed to be a lavish kingdom. He squeaked, trying to alert everyone else of what he found. Jesse, who was closest to him, gazed at him in confusion before approaching where he was. Zephyr dove down, the brunette shifting his gaze downward.

There it was. A large golden city in the clouds. It almost seemed unreal and he had to take a moment to process. When he did, he began to speak. "Hey, uh, you guys see that?" He inquired, alerting the others' attention.

"What?" Lukas pondered as he and the others made their way over to Jesse to see what he had found. They were all just as perplexed, yet amazed at what they were seeing.

"So very strange.." Ivor murmured.

"What is that?" Mini quiered, confused.

"Some place better than here obviously!" Nikki huffed.



"Wow! It looks like some kind of city? That's incredible!" Jess beamed, impressed. She couldn't see much from where they were but the colors and architecture were gorgeous.

Ivor put two-in-two together. If the Blaze Rods weren't here then that must be the only other place they could be. And the only other place something else he's been longing for must be. "That's it! That's where it must be! The Eversource!" He gushed, unable to keep his excitement to a minimum.

"A city in the clouds.." Petra gasped. "It almost sounds impossible."

"If the Eversource is there, I'm willing to bet Aiden would be there also," Nikki figured. Zephyr flew back onto her shoulder to rest his wings, squeaking in agreement.

"I just don't know how we're going to reach it!" Lukas frowned.

"Yeah, that's definitely going to be a problem.." Petra agreed, scratching the back of her neck nervously.

"I can't believe this. We fall through a portal into another world, and then we can't even go anywhere!" Mini complained, crossing her arms. "We're pretty much just sitting ducks."

"Zephyr could fly us across!" Maggie suggested, trying to come up with a solution. "He's strong enough to hold us all, ain't he?"

Zephyr squeaked dismissively, not too thrilled at the idea. Nikki noticed his unenthusiasm to carry everyone across on his own and awkwardly shifted her gaze towards her. "I.. don't think that's the best idea. There's too many of us," she replied. She thought for a moment before continuing. "Can't we just, like, build our way over?"

"Uh, how?" Lukas inquired, raising a brow.

Ivor glared at him. "Oh, please! You've heard of a bridge, haven't you?" He scowled, feeling as though it was an obvious solution to their issue.

Lukas however seemed unsure. Sure, it's an easy and quick solution but what if there aren't enough blocks to get them across safely? Not to mention, this city is very far from where they are. "I don't know. Seems like a long way down," he frowned. "Do we have enough blocks? It's really, really far."

"Yes. Very astute, Lukas," Ivor said sarcastically.

"Ivor the Crump strikes again, I see?" Petra rolled her eyes playfully.

As they spoke, Zephyr flew off Nikki's shoulder and dove down. He squeaked, signaling that there was land beneath them. Jesse and Jess instinctively kneeled down to get a closer look, scanning the amount of land they had beneath them. It seemed to be a lot, maybe enough to get them safely to the city.

Jess grins slightly as she stands, shifting her gaze towards the blonde. "Elementary, my dear Lukas," she said teasingly. "The underside of this island is much, much bigger than it appears."

Lukas seems surprised by this. "Really?" He replied.

Ivor saw where she was going with this. He gazed off the edge to look at the land before them for a moment before gazing at the blonde. "Jess' right! If we strip this whole island down to nothing.. it might just be enough," he confirmed.

Without another word, everyone got to work. They worked together, stripping the island bare. They made sure to leave some room for themselves so they won't accidentally fall off the edge. While they were doing this, Nikki told Zephyr to get a head start to fly to the city to see if he could spot the Blaze Rods. The EnderBat gladly did so and soon, all there is left is a couple of blocks in which they have trouble making room for everyone.

"Stop pushing!" Ivor huffed.

"I'm not pushing. Lukas and Mini are pushing!" Petra accused.

"I'm just trying to keep away from the edge!" Lukas said.

"Yeah, you guys aren't the ones who are having a mild panic attack from all of this!" Mini scowled.

"It's ALL edge!" Maggie whinged.

Jesse sighed, facepalming. He then scanned their surroundings. Seeing that they obviously couldn't break any more blocks and the city was now dead ahead of them, he figured that the rest of this was going to be easy. "Okay, gang. I think that should do it. Let's make ourselves a bridge," he said.

"Finally!" Mini sighed in relief.

The gang started to build. They had to go back and reuse some of the blocks since there wasn't enough to build a bridge long enough to take them to the city in one go. As they worked, Ivor ended up getting sidetracked, beginning to build something else by the bridge. After what felt like an eternity, Jesse placed the final block. The bridge was now finished.

"Okay, this is our stop. Evvvvvvverybody off," he declared. Everyone one by one, walks off the bridge and onto the mainland. They seem to find themselves at the entrance of large golden gates. Now that they have gotten to the city, now they need to find a way inside.

"I still think Zephyr could've flown us over," Maggie joked as she placed her hands on her hips.

"Haha," Nikki giggled, rolling her eyes playfully.

Mini meanwhile collapsed onto the ground, relieved. It felt nice to finally be on solid ground, not having to worry about being pushed off the edge and into the unknown. "Sweet ground. Sweet, solid ground!" She beamed. Maggie giggles a little at her reaction. She was glad that they were now at someplace safer.

Petra took a quick breather before turning around. She froze when she noticed something that stuck out from their bridge and couldn't help but to groan slightly. "Ivor.. seriously?" She said, irritated. Next to their bridge was a skull with lava pouring out from its eyes. It was an obvious reference to the house he built earlier in town.

"Heh, sorry. I couldn't help myself," he chuckled. "LONG LIVE LAVA."

"I think it's cool," Jess bubbled.

"Of course you do, Jess.." Petra sighed.

Mini sat up from the ground, giggling. She likes how even after all this time, Ivor still has his goofy personality that he had when she was younger. Maggie grins in amusement as well. Before anyone else could respond however, a shaky unfamiliar voice spoke from behind them.

"..you're building.." they quavered.

The gang whipped their heads around, spotting a young frightened man behind them. He was extremely shocked and as soon as they laid his eyes on them, he slowly started to back away. "I.. you.. I don't.." he stammered.

The friends gazed at each other, perplexed. Who was this man and why was he so scared of them building? Did they accidentally trigger something to frighten him? Ivor however grinned, amused.

"Hey, yeah, we're building? Is something wrong with that..?" Nikki inquired.

"Yeah, you're acting like we just committed a war crime or something," Maggie commented.

The man's expression shifted from fear to confusion. He straightened up his pose, however he was still extremely nervous. "I, uh.. you don't know..?" He questioned. "Y-You were building. Unauthorized building is against the law!"

The gang's confusion quickly turned to shock as he broke the news. A law against building? None of them could ever think that someone would even think of outlawing building unless it's being supervised.

Mini pulled herself off the ground, folding her arms over her chest. "Wait, there's a law saying people can't build? Sounds a little harsh if you ask me," she said. Her friends all agreed.

The man was left even more baffled. "Yes! It's forbidden!" He confirmed.

"This.. this makes no sense. No sense at all!" Ivor doubted. To him, there's no way that someone would outlaw such an important aspect in life.

"I-I.. well, that's the law..?"

The siblings shared eye contact for a moment before Jesse turned to gaze at the man. Surely, all of this must be some kind of misunderstanding. "Okay, I'll bite. Why's building against the law?" He asked.

The man didn't answer. He once again backed away, his dark eyes showing terror. He didn't want to get in trouble, especially if any of the guards came out and saw them. "Oh, this is making me terribly nervous.." he whimpered. "First those other outsiders, now you.."

Lukas' eyes widened when he mentioned 'other outsiders.' He figured he must be talking about the Blaze Rods. He stepped forward, hoping to get more information. "'Other outsiders?' Where are they?" He questioned.

At this point, Zephyr flew back to them, bubbling in relief that they were able to make it onto the mainland safely. He also had some information he had to share, but as soon as the man spotted him, he yelped and backed away in front of an entrance.

"T-They went to the inn, I'm sorry, but that's all I know," he revealed before bolting away, disappearing inside the entrance. Jess tried to run after him, hoping to help calm him down so they could speak with him to get some context as to what he meant.

"Wait, wait, wait, come back!" She called.

"I'm super busy, sorry!"

"Annd he's gone," Petra commented.

"Damn it.." Lukas cursed under his breath. One of their only leads to find Aiden was now gone. Zephyr landed on Nikki's shoulder, squeaking. Nikki listened to him and once he was done, nodded her head.

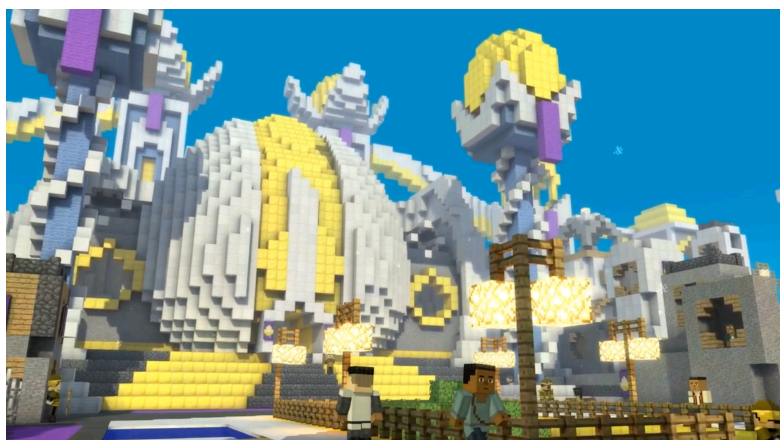
"Well, now what?" Maggie pondered.

"We follow him," Nikki replied, beginning to walk inside the corridor the man escaped through. The rest of the team followed behind her. The passageway they took seemed to bring them closer inside the mainland, which the gang didn't mind.

"I wonder if everyone here is that.. nervous," Mini wondered out loud. Jesse couldn't help agreeing. If everyone they come across is that skittish, they might not be able to make that much progress.

"Something tells me that man will NOT last a day in BoomTown," Maggie joked.

Soon, the gang found themselves in the large city. It was a lot more extravagant here compared to what they could see from that dirt island. It was immense and beautiful, many of the decorations being made from gold and iron blocks. The city also seemed to be egg-themed, the large luxurious palace including many of the decorations resembling eggs.



The group was astonished by what they saw. They 've seen many cities before, but this one felt like they just walked onto lands in which a king and his family would reside. Even Zephyr was impressed.

"Wow.." Jesse gasped in awe.

"This is.. incredible, I-.." Nikki beamed in amazement. "I don't even know what to say!"

"It's beautiful! Absolutely stunning!" Jess gushed, trying to keep her voice and excitement to a minimum. Lukas glanced at her, smiling. He always found her excitement to be adorable.

"Yes. Clearly, the Eversource is capable of miraculous things," Ivor mused. "And when I get my hands on it-."

"Hey, how about you take a massive chill pill and we FIND it first?" Petra scowled, glaring at him. They had barely just arrived and he was already boasting about taking the Eversource for himself.

"Yes, yes, yes. I'm just getting excited!"

Lukas eyes then narrowed in concern, his stomach churning in worry and anxiousness. "As crazy as Aiden's been lately, if he gets that thing.. it would be bad," he pointed out.

"Well, if we beat him to it, he won't be able to get his slimy little hands on the thing!" Maggie responded nonchalantly.

"Yeah. Zephyr here told me that he saw the Blaze Rods roaming around the city. They're definitely here," Nikki revealed. "He couldn't see exactly what they were doing though but I bet they're planning something."

"About that.. I'm starting to think that maybe we should try and keep a low profile while we look for the inn.." Jess nervously said. "These people seem pretty suspicious of us."

"Agreed. You saw how that guy reacted when he saw Zephyr. It's obvious these people get startled easily. Nikki, I think it's best if you try to keep Zephyr out of sight for now," Jesse agreed. Even though he grew to like Zephyr, he didn't want any unnecessary attention to be drawn to them any further.

Zephyr actually didn't mind this. He disliked having the attention on him anyways. He flew up and hid inside Nikki's hair. It was easy since Nikki's fluffy curls were enough to keep him out of sight.

"Low profile keeping, keeping all animals hidden.. anything else?" Maggie asked.

Everyone huddled around as Jesse began to speak. "Spread out and look for the inn. Don't wander off too far, none of us know this place around. Let's meet back here in an hour," he ordered. "If you spot anything that might lead us to the Blaze Rods or the inn, give the rest of us a shout, okay?"

Everyone nods, showing that they understood the plan. They began to spread out to cover more ground. They all searched for clues that might lead them closer to the Blaze Rods.

Not even a minute has passed and Ivor loudly introduces himself to someone. The person stared at him judgmentally, not responding back. Jess and Mini approached him, both of them a little confused but they shrugged it off.

"Doin' okay, Ivor?" Jess inquired.

"Better than okay! This city is magnificent! You should really take notes for that town of yours," Ivor triumphed.

"Yeah.. totally," Jess replied.

Mini expected her to say something by how Ivor was drawing so much attention to him and was surprised when she didn't and began to walk away. "I thought Jesse said to keep a low profile?" She reminded her in confusion as she quickened her pace to catch up with her.

Jess knew she was right but since Ivor was really exhilarated about all this, she didn't want to ruin his mood. "Let him have this. As long as he doesn't get into any trouble," she responded. Mini wasn't sure about this but she didn't protest as she drifted on.

Meanwhile, Jesse and Nikki had been working together to search for any clues they might need to find the Blaze Rods. So far, they've found nothing yet, which frustrated Jesse. Nikki was more annoyed than frustrated, but as they looked, she couldn't help but to admire the lavish scenery around them. Zephyr however, while staying hidden, peeked out a couple times to help with the search. He made sure to be careful for if someone saw him, it would most likely spell trouble.

After a minute or so, they spotted a crafting table, a long line piled behind it. A guard stood by the crafting table, supervising it so that no one would do any funny business. If Jesse didn't spot the crafting table, he would've assumed that those people were lining up for free diamonds or any other rare item.



"Boy, these are some popular crafting tables," Nikki commented.

"Don't worry, everyone, your turn will come in time," the guard announced. "Please have your materials ready when you approach the crafting table."

At the very end of the line, the siblings spotted a young man groaning at the announcement. He looked both frustrated and desperate, seemingly unable to keep his patience. "Augh, I knew I shouldn't have waited so long to eat!" He whined.

"That guy is really itching to use the crafting table," Jesse observed.

Nikki glanced at him. "What should we do?" She wondered.

Jesse began to ponder. He remembered the cake Jess had found back at the temple and went up to her, asking for it. She was a little bit confused but nothingness, handed it to him. Once he had it in his grasp, Jesse approached the man.

"Hey, if you're hungry, you should try this," he said kindly, handing the entire cake to him.

He watched as the man's eyes widened in surprise. "If you say so-." He said, taking a quick bite. He was immediately delighted by the sweet flavors the cake offered. He's never tasted anything like this before. It felt like he had just walked into heaven. "Ooohhh, holy handouts. That's incredible!" Without another word, he gobbled the entire cake up within a matter of seconds. Despite this, he was still hungry. "Do you.. do you have any more of that?"

"Sorry, all out," Jesse frowned.

"That's.. that's okay. I may just never be happy again, until I find more of that.. 'cake,'" he whimpered.

The siblings shared awkward glances, unable to find anything else to say. Nikki then shifted her gaze up at him. "This is a long line just to use a crafting table," she said, trying to change the topic.

"Eh, it's always like this. What, um, what can I do for you? I'm so hungry.." he replied. He felt like since they had given the time to give him some food, he might at least return the favor.

"Um, we heard you guys have an inn somewhere around here.." Jesse said, going straight to the point. "Where is it?"

The man's eyes widened slightly, which signaled to the siblings that he knew what they were talking about. "Oh, uh, Milo's place? Ha. That guy's hilarious. He's over thataway," he pointed somewhere on the other side of town. The siblings gazed over at where he was pointing at but they couldn't exactly see where it was. They were still grateful nonetheless.

"Milo, ' huh? Thanks," Nikki replied. The two then went on their way, hoping to find more clues.

Nearby, Jess was looking at a heavily guarded area. This place looks like it would be the area where the most sacred of treasure would be stored. Instead, all that sat there was a single furnace, a banner attached to the structure over it to alert of its location.

Jess stared at it, both confused and curious before approaching it to take a closer look. That and she wanted to try and at least talk to one of the guards to get some context on what was going on. "Hey there," she greeted.

The guard glanced at her, confused. "Are you on the schedule for the furnace this afternoon? Didn't think there were any more appointments today. Hang on, let me see here," he pulled out a sign which contained a list for who is allowed to use the furnace that day. "'Dale: Ten stone blocks.' Oh, yes, that went very well.. 'Melissa: Three cooked porkchops.' She rescheduled." He chuckled. "Classic Mel."

Jess was left even more puzzled at this. Why would she need an appointment to simply use a furnace? "'Appointment?' Why would I need an appointment to use a furnace?" She asked.

He and the other guard that was standing next to him stared at her judgingly. "By city law, acts of crafting are only authorized with the Founder's permission. The appointment system is in place to safeguard against any illegal building or crafting," the guard informed her, putting the list back in his inventory. "If you wish to make an appointment, speak to the Founder. Good day."

Jess huffed as she walked away. This place was insanely gorgeous but everything about it felt so.. ugly. As she roamed the city streets, she noticed a sign. She stopped in place and began to read out loud. "'No building, no crafting, no brewing, no forging, unless with EXPRESS PERMISSION from The Founder. All complaints must be registered in person. That's it, you can stop writing now,'" she said. She then shivered. "Intense."

"Right?" A familiar voice spoke up. She shifted her gaze towards the source of the voice, spotting Petra. "I've never been to a place that's so.. stricting. I just hope we find those Blaze Rods soon."

"Same. There's no way they could've gotten far," Jess agreed. She then placed a hand on her hip. "Whatcha looking at?"

"Just admiring the sights, actually. This place is so cool," Petra admitted. "I'm not usually one for, like, 'checking out people's builds' or whatever.. but even I have to admit this is really impressive."



Jess nodded in agreement. "Yeah, I wish everything else could be just as beautiful as its scenery," she admitted. The two then gaze over at a guard standing at the top of the polished gold and cobblestone stairs, which lead inside the palace. Jess wondered if somehow the Blaze Rods managed to go inside. It would explain why they haven't found them yet.

The guard must've noticed them staring since he glared at them and began to scowl. "The Founder isn't accepting visitors right now," he huffed. The two frowned, but they didn't bother to protest as they continued on with their search.

Meanwhile, Nikki had been observing someone standing in front of a couple wood blocks, a guard standing next to her. She had been so fixated on it that she didn't notice Maggie coming up next to her.

"Hey Nikki! No time no see?" Maggie beamed. "Whatcha found?"

Nikki flinched slightly, not expecting her to come. She was still happy to see her however. "Hey Mags! Nothing yet," she replied. "Y'know, it feels weird to be somewhere so.. mild. With our other adventures, it felt like every corner was a death sentence."

"Right? It's so weird," Maggie agreed. "I'm not complaining though. It's nice to get some time to chill." She gave her a small, yet mischievous grin. Nikki blushed slightly, feeling butterflies in her stomach as she returned the smile. Before she could respond however, a new voice popped up.

"Captain Reginald at your service," the voice said. The friends gaze at where the voice was coming from, seeing that the guard that was supervising the woman building was now looking at them. They share unsure glances before focusing their attention onto him.

"Hey, so what are you guys up to?" Nikki pondered.

"Ah, just supervising this citizen while she does her build," Reginald answered causally.

The citizen excitedly glanced at them. "The Founder finally approved my petition," she said excitedly.

Maggie raised a brow, perplexed. "The Founder?" She said. Was that how these people called their ruler?

Reginald was surprised that she wasn't aware of the Founder's existence. "You don't know the Founder?" He said. He then pointed at the large, lavish palace. "That's her palace, up there. She is the Keeper of the Eversource! Builds everything you see. Some days, I can't even fathom how she keeps it all straight. She's incredible. I'm, heh.. I'm a fan."

"She builds EVERYTHING?" Nikki said, stunned.

Reginald nodded his head. "Yeah, well it sure is amazing. That's why she gets to make the calls about what does or doesn't get built," he confirmed.

"Like my build," the woman added.

"It's no easy feat to get all of these oak blocks," Reginald then went on. "Your petition was very well-handled."

"Aw, gosh, that's nice of you."

"Wow, I feel bad for you," Maggie blurted out.

Nikki cringed slightly, especially noticing how they both seemed confused and offended by this. Luckily, she was quick to come up with a response. "What-.. Maggie meant to say was.. we don't understand why everyone shouldn't be allowed to build," she awkwardly said.

Reginald still wasn't sure of this but decided to shrug it off. "Ha! What a sentiment. I mean, it IS a good thought, but.. that's crazy," he replied.

A question popped up in Nikki's mind. "If you guys can't build anything, then what kind of stuff do you do for fun?" She wondered.

"Oh.." Reginald paused for a moment to think before glancing down at her once more. "All sorts of things. Make wishlists of resources, practice low-inventory builds. Some people do poetry. It's a pretty great place to live."

"That sounds like an understatement," Maggie commented. "Hm. 'Reginald,' huh? Can I call you Reggie?"

Reginald frowned, obviously not fond of the nickname. "No. I'd really rather you didn't. It's.. Reginald," he replied.

"Okay 'Reginald,'" Maggie huffed. She couldn't help but to notice the fancy dark green and golden uniform he had on and couldn't help but to be intrigued by it. "Fancy duds you're wearing. Is that a uniform?"

Reginald chuckled. "I try not to brag about it, but I'm actually the Captain of the Guard.." he revealed. "One of the reasons I'm allowed to supervise a build like this one."

The two friends gazed at each other with surprised expressions before Nikki quickly shifted her gaze towards him. "Well, don't let us interrupt you guys. Good luck," she said.

"Much obliged."

They then walk away in silence. Nikki glanced over at Maggie, feeling guilty that this trip was as exciting as she thought it would be. She hoped that something more exciting would happen, yet everything's been so mild so far. "I'm sorry if this adventure is boring so far," she frowned.

Maggie gave her an assuring grin. "It's okay, Nikki! I'm sure you guys will figure something out. You always do!" She encouraged. "If you guys could find Soren, then finding those 'Blaze Rods' will be no sweat."

Nikki smiled, her cheeks heating up slightly. "Hold on tight, K? We're going to beat some Blaze Rod ass," she said.

"I'll be looking forward to it. But for now, I'll just enjoy the view."

The two parted ways, Nikki going up to her older sister to discuss what they've found so far. When Nikki noticed Lukas nearby, she grinned and waved over at him. "How's it going, Lukas?" She greeted casually.

Lukas, who was observing the architecture of the city, flinched when he heard Nikki call his name. He whipped his head around, spotting the sisters approaching him. "I'm okay. Just watching these guards," he half-lied. He then shivered, leaning in a little and began whispering. "They really mean business."

"Yeah, I wouldn't mess with them if I were you," Jess cringed.

"How's the search coming along?"

Nikki crossed her arms, disappointed. "Wish I could say it was going well.." she grumbled.

'Yeah, this case is hard to crack," Jess frowned. "And I don't think any of us have seen the Blaze Rods anywhere."

Lukas felt extremely sympathetic towards the two. He could understand their frustration, especially since they had little to no leads besides the inn and most people in town seemed to be intimidated by them. "Geez, I wish I could help more," he imparted. "If I spot anything. I'll be sure to say something, K?"

"Thanks Lukas."

Nikki noticed how.. stressed he seemed to be. Sure, this mission was pretty stressful but he seemed more down than anyone else. "You sure you're good, Lukas?" She asked. "I mean, it's okay if you're not."

Jess noticed how stressed out he was too, a wave of concern washing over her. "Yeah.. It's not good to try to hold everything in," she coaxed.

Lukas hesitated. He was flattered that the sisters cared so much about him but he didn't want to twist the attention onto him. The only thing they need right now is to focus on the Blaze Rods. "I'm fine, I promise," he tried to assure him.

Jess' frown deepened. She had a feeling that he must be lying in order to direct the attention off him. Petra did the same thing when she had WitherSickness. She didn't push the topic any further however, wanting to respect his boundaries. "Okay. We're going to continue to try and hash this out," she murmured, beginning to depart. Nikki gazed up at Lukas for a moment before quickly lagging behind.

Lukas nodded, letting out a heavy sigh. He bowed his head, crossing his arms as he closed his eyelids to hide how glossy his eyes were. He wished that things with Aiden didn't end up like this. He wished that somehow, someday, things would be different.

The sisters wandered to a different part of the city. This time, they found themselves in some sort of alleyway. They stayed quiet for a moment before Nikki broke the silence. "You think we got everything we need?" She pondered.

Jess still couldn't get Lukas out of her head. She hated seeing him like this. She tried her best to focus on the mission however. "Actually, no. We still need to find more information," she replied.

"Well.. earlier, Mini told me how she saw the guy we bumped into earlier. Apparently, the inn is runned by some messy dude named Milo," Nikki informed her. "Jesse and I talked to some other guy who said the same thing. That's all I have so far."

Jess processed the new information her sister revealed for a moment but she still felt like something was missing. "That's interesting but it still feels a little vague." She then groans. "I can't wait to leave this place. Everything here is so.. controlling."

"Yeah, but what do you expect from an island floating in the middle of nowhere?" Nikki tried to reason. "We're probably miles upon real ground.. if there IS a ground, that is."

"Yeah, but it's getting frustrating. I can't imagine needing some sort of permit just to build a garden," Jess complained. "And imagine the damage Aiden could be doing right now."

Nikki was just about to respond, but halted when she noticed a young man nearby. He was leaning against the wall, talking to another man. He sure was just as messy as he was described to be and judging from his serious expression, they could only imagine what the two men were talking about.

A sign was hovering over them which read: 'Milo's Inn.' Zephyr peeked out from Nikki's hair and immediately when he spotted them, he began squeaking, recognizing him. This was enough to alert Nikki that they had found the place.

"Is that the messy dude those people were talking about?" She said, pointing at the Inn.

Jess gazed over at where she was pointing. Judging from the sign and how Zephyr instantly recognized it, she figured that this is where they needed to go next. "All signs point to that being the innkeeper. Like that sign," she said. "Let's go have a look."

Without another word, the sisters drifted on, approaching the Inn. As they approached, they noticed how the men pulled out a couple of sticks to the person who they assumed to be Milo.

⌚»★«⌚ Chapter 2: A New Ally ⌚»★«⌚

"-and where should I put them?" He asked.

Milo quickly takes the sticks, taking a quick glance around. He noticed the sisters staring at them and immediately felt nervous. "Yes, just give them here. I'll deal with them," he whispered. "Get out of here. Go. Go!"

The man quickly bolts away as Milo leans against the wall once more, trying to act more casual. "Why, hello there. What can I do for you?" He asked. He then chuckled nervously. "I'm not sure what custom is, where YOU come from. But here, heh, it is considered impolite to stare. Especially when people are doing boring things not worth staring at.. like simply minding their own business next to a wall."

"What, uh, what was that all about? With the whispering? And the sticks?" Jess inquired curiously.



This only seems to fuel Milo's anxiousness further. He piped up from the wall as a guard strolls by. "Ahh, sh, sh, sh!" He hushed before trying to seem normal. "I don't know what you're talking about. None of that here. It's, ha, not Stick Allowance Day, after all. So why would I, a humble innkeeper, have sticks?" The guard glanced at them skeptically but finding no reason to

suspect them, he wandered on. Milo sighed in relief at this. "Seriously, just put all that out of your mind. It is not important. It was just friends exchanging pleasantries. Nothing more to see there."

Jess noticed the guard from the corner of her eye. Getting the signal, she played along. "Hey. I've already forgotten all about it. No problemo," she assured him.

Milo's muscles began to relax. "Fantastic. Much appreciated. Now what can I do for you, friend? I'm busy, but I can spare a moment for some friendly strangers," he said. "But, ahem, not too many moments, ha ha. What did you need?"

"Some punks who call themselves the Blaze Rods are trying to steal the Eversource. Know anything about it?" Nikki quiered, going straight to the point. She doesn't want to waste any more time.

Milo's eyes widened at the discovery. "Stealing the Eversource? How outlandish. Sounds like dangerous business to get mixed up in if you ask me!" He huffed, beginning to walk in front of the doors of the Inn. "I'm sorry, but it's like I told those other outsiders. I can't help you. Now please-."

"Nikki! Jess!" A new voice called. The three of them gaze towards its source, spotting Jesse approaching them. Behind him was the rest of the team.

Petra stared at the guy curiously. "Hey, this our guy?" She inquired.

"He tell you where to find the Blaze Rods?" Ivor asked.

"And hurry, the clock's ticking!" Mini said.

Milo was overwhelmed by the sudden outburst of questions. "How many of you are there?!" He yelped, alarmed. "I told you. I don't know anything!"

"He hasn't told you anything yet?" Ivor scowled.

"Is he hiding those punks somewhere?" Maggie accused.

"I am uncomfortable with this line of questioning!" Milo caterwauled.

Jess gazed at the Innkeeper, almost pleadingly. "I'm sorry to put you on the spot like this but you could trust me. Nothing bad is going to happen," she coaxed. "Just help us."

The two shared eye contact. Jess hoped that the Innkeeper would understand. Luckily for her, he finally gave in.

"Fine! If it will make you leave me alone, those 'Blaze Rods' fellows DID come talk to me earlier. Wanted to know where the Eversource was," he divulged.

"Called it!" Maggie commented.

"I just told him what everyone else already knows! The Eversource is in the palace with the Founder," he went on. "That's all that happened, I swear."

"What a bunch of creeps!" Petra grumbled.

"Yes, I wasn't too fond of them."

"So where is Aiden- or.. the Blaze Rods now?" Jesse inquired

"The group left for the palace and I haven't seen them since."

"At least we know where to go next," Mini figured. "How do you think we'll be able to enter the palace?"

Before Milo could answer, a new voice spoke up. Maggie and Nikki recognized the voice belonged to Reginald. "Attention! Attention, everyone! Just a moment of your time, please! Emergency meeting! Attendance is mandatory!" He declared.

"What is that?" Maggie wondered out-loud.

"Oh shit!" Milo cursed under his breath.

The group saw guards leading civilians to the palace. Everyone stopped what they were doing, following guards to the palace. Milo followed them also. The gang shared perplexed expressions, all of them wondering the same thing.

"Curious. I wonder what that's all about," Ivor said.

Not wanting to look suspicious, they followed everyone else to the palace. Citizens crowded around the golden building, everyone whispering to their neighbor as they wondered what the emergency meeting was about.

Soon, a woman around her mid to late twenties exited the palace. The sunlight brushed against her pale skin and her lime green eyes showed great solemnity. She wore a long, elegant golden and black gown, a matching golden circlet with an orange gem and a white belt that rested around her waist. She was very gorgeous.

She stood before the crowd as the Blaze Rods existed behind her, Aiden coming up next to her. The gang shared worried expressions when they spotted the Blaze Rods. Jesse's eyes narrowed as he glared at Aiden.

"Oh! It's the Founder!" A civilian gasped.

"I wonder what this is all about," Petra frowned.

"Yes.. I'm nervous being surrounded by so many people," Ivor whimpered, fidgeting with his fingers to fight off his nervousness.

"You and I both," Mini agreed.

Maggie gazed at them in worry. "We could go to a less dense place if you guys want," she suggested.

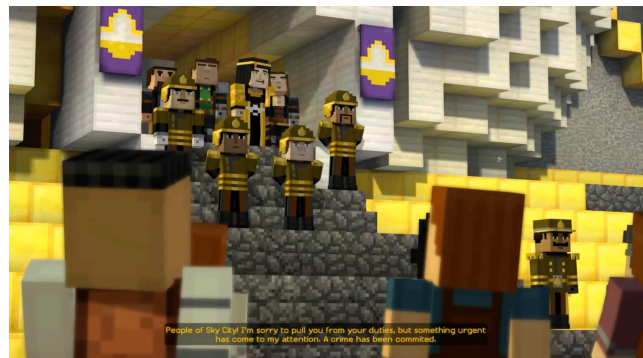
"Guys.. I think I found the Blaze Rods," Jesse murmured.

"This.. is not good," Jess whined.

"What are they doing..?" Lukas asked quietly.

"Whatever it is.. I doubt it's something good," Nikki replied.

"People of Sky City! I'm sorry to pull you from your duties, but something urgent has come to my attention. A crime has been committed," the Founder announced. As soon as she broke the news, the crowd gasped in horror, all whispering to each other as they nervously speculated what the crime may be. "Please, remain calm. Earlier today, outsiders built a bridge into our fair city from a distant island."



The golden gates of SkyCity opened, revealing the bridge in which the gang used to bridge themselves across to the city. As soon as everyone spotted the bridge, many gasped once more.

"Now, whether these outsiders know it or not, this is a violation of Sky City's most sacred law. NO unauthorized building," the Founder went on. Some people in the crowd began cursing the group out, enraged that they would break such an important law. The Founder, however, tried her best to calm the roaring crowd.

Milo gazed at the gang with surprised, wide eyes. "Wait, was that you? Are you the bridge builders..?" He asked.

Jesse glanced at him nervously. "We didn't know it was illegal! It was just a bridge!" He whispered.

"Heck, if we knew it was illegal, we'd have no problems covering our tracks," Maggie said, trying her best to keep her voice low.

"This is nuts.." Petra whimpered.

Mini notices that Aiden was whispering something into the Founder's ear. This increased her worriedness. "Guys.. look!" She whispered. It was already too late.

"Jesse! Wherever you are, step forward now. I have already been informed of you and your allies' identities," The Founder said. Jesse flinched when he heard his name. "I appreciate that you all may be ignorant of our laws, but I will warn you. SkyCity is small. And I promise that if you try to hide.. I will find you." Her eyes narrowed as she finished speaking.

Guards began to mount from the stairs, approaching the crowd. Jess assumed that it was to search people to find out who might be guilty. Nikki began to grow frustrated at their circumstances.

"Aiden has gone crazy at this point!" She huffed.

"We need to get to that Eversource at whatever cost! This is clearly our fastest way into the castle!" Ivor said as he stepped up. Petra's eyes shot wide as she realized what he was about to do.

"By getting arrested?!" She protested, clearly disagreeing with his decision.

"Ivor. I could understand where you're coming from but there's plenty of other ways to get inside the palace that don't deal with getting arrested!" Mini said, agreeing with Petra. She didn't want to deal with having to break out of jail.

"Wait! Don't be fooled by the Founder's lies," Milo coaxed. Judging from his expression, they could tell he was being sincere. "I can help you come up with a plan to get into the palace."

Jesse glanced at him, nodding his head. He barely knew him, yet he was ready to trust him if it meant being able to sneak inside the palace without getting arrested.

Ivor however didn't listen. He hopped up, holding up his hand. "Here I am! I built the bridge!" He called.

"Are you crazy? Does she look like she's going to help us?" Nikki hissed.

It was already too late. A guard marched over and grabbed him by the arm. Ivor scowled at him as he began to struggle against his grasp. "Hey! Unhand me! This is completely unnecessary!" He nagged.

Milo slowly backed up in front of an alleyway, gesturing to them to follow him. "Follow me.." he murmured.

Jesse felt extremely overwhelmed. With all the chaos that erupted around them, he couldn't think straight. He tried his best to think of what to do however. They would all be caught if they don't try something. Sure, it's easy to get into the palace if they turn themselves in but how would that really help them if they're locked up?

He gazed over at Milo for a moment before gazing over at Ivor. "Sorry, Ivor. I'm going with Milo," he decided.

"Me too," Petra agreed.

"You know it!" Nikki said.

"Quick then, follow me!" Milo urged. As they began to make their escape, Jesse expected for everyone to follow him. He was proven wrong when he whipped his head around to see if everyone's here, noticing that Jess, Mini, and Lukas didn't move from their spots.

"Jess! Let's go!" He called.

Jess couldn't hear him over the chaos. She was horrified that a guard would dare touch her friend like this. "Hey, don't treat him like that! We didn't do anything wrong!" She scowled. Lukas and Mini stood by her side. The people around them gasped, recognizing them as the builders.

"Ha! Knew you'd see it my way. Thank you, Jess," Ivor grinned before facing the guard grabbing him. "HEY, hands off the robes!" Mini rushed forward, leaping into the air. Using her legs, she kicked the guard in the face and away from Ivor, freeing him. Ivor wiped himself off, happy to be released. "Thank you, Mini."

Mini grinned in response but suddenly, the Founder's voice spoke up. "Guards, bring them forward!" She ordered. Almost immediately, more guards arrived, grabbing them and bringing them forward. Jesse, Petra, Nikki and Maggie all stepped to the side, watching in horror as their friends were all grabbed.

"Sis, I-- I'll find a way to help you. I promise!" Jesse called to his sister. Without another word, he and the others that were yet to be captured, disappeared inside of an alleyway.

Aiden was confused as they were brought forward. Where was Jesse? He scanned the crowd, noticing Jesse escaping with a couple other people. His expression was murderous as he watched them abscond to safety. "Hey! Hey! There's more of them! They're getting away!" He called, pointing at them.

"After them!" Reginald ordered. Many other guards chased after them as the four out of eight of the group were brought forward.

Lukas glared at Aiden smirking before glancing at Jess. "I hope you know what you're doing.." he whispered. Jess whimpered slightly, unsure if she made the right decision to turn themselves in.

Ivor and Mini continued to fight. Two other guards even had to hold Mini down because she was able to beat the guard who grabbed her. This enraged Ivor and he tried his best to defend her. Reginald led them up the stairs, where the Founder was waiting for them. The Blaze Rods were snickering behind her.

The Founder gaped down at them for a moment before speaking. "We meet at last.." she murmured.

"Listen. I don't know what that guy's told you.. but you can't listen to him!" Jess tried to reason pleadingly.

"Aw. Jess, I'm hurt. Wounded," Aiden said tauntingly, wiping away an invisible tear.

The Founder was unphased by this, not seeming to believe her at all. "Hm. I admire your honesty in stepping forward," she huffed. This should be.. interesting." Without another word, she calmly walks back inside her palace, the Blaze Rods trailing behind her. The smaller group, now separated from their friends, all frowned as guards pushed them forward.

As they were brought inside the palace, Jesse, Petra, Nikki and Maggie all followed Milo. Jesse's nervousness only began to rise as he heard guards screaming for them. He made the wrong move by glancing behind him, spotting multiple guards racing after him.

The group rounded a corner, catching many of their pursuers off guard as they collapsed with the wall. Jesse then slides under some guards in front of him, avoiding capture. Maggie meanwhile hops above them. She could jump extremely high with ease. She looks behind her for a moment before huffing.

"Any ideas as to how to get these old dudes off our trail?" She scowled, beginning to grow annoyed.

Nikki thought for a moment before grinning. "Zeph!" She called. Zephyr soared out of her hair, stretching his wings. When he noticed what was going on, he fluttered towards the guards. Many of them were horrified at the sight of him. They've never seen a bat before, let alone an EnderBat and seeing one brought instant chills.

Zephyr took this opportunity to screech loudly. The guards all covered their ears in response, Zephyr going as far as to even lift one in the air by his collar and tossing him at other guards. They all collided onto the ground as another guard tried to grab him. Zephyr however was able to escape just in time, now hovering over the gang.

Maggie, who saw most of what happened, was impressed by the little bat's skills. "For a little guy, he sure has a lot of punch in him!" She beamed.

"This way!" Milo instructed.

⌚»★«⌚ Chapter 3: Build Club ⌚»★«⌚

With no guards no longer following them, Milo led the gang inside a small wide-open room, ducking behind the wall. They waited and listened as a couple of guards ran past them, shouting that they went in that direction. After a minute or so, the noises faded. It was now quiet.

Milo took a deep breath before stepping outside, quickly scanning their surroundings carefully. No one was there. Now that the coast was clear, he signaled the others to follow them and swiftly, they ran inside a backway entrance that leads to the Inn.

They ran down the stairs, finding themselves in some sort of bar. The fireplace along with some lights illuminated the room and there was a man standing behind the bar table. The bar seemed to be closed since there was pretty much no one else in the room.

Milo panted as he approached a wall. It had nothing on it whatsoever. It seemed like an ordinary wall. "Just in here, yes.." he murmured.

Petra quickly scanned the room as panic and confusion began to settle in. There was no hiding place at all down here. If a guard walked on, they'd be caught immediately. "There's nowhere to hide in here!" She cried. "It's a dead-end!"

Milo turned around, a serious expression spreading across his face. "Before I take you guys any further, you must take an oath," he said. As he spoke, they could hear guards shouting for them to reveal themselves. "You must swear to never reveal what I am about to show you."

"What?!" Maggie said, puzzled.

"Do you swear that?"

Jesse and Nikki exchanged worried glances as Zephyr rested on Nikki's shoulder. Jesse then focused his attention onto Milo, saluting. "Milo, I solemnly swear that I will never tell your secret to anyone else," he vowed.

"A little dramatic but yeah.. what he said," Nikki added, crossing her arms.

Milo grinned. "Fantastic," he beamed before gazing over at the man at the desk. "Philippe!" Philippe nodded at once before pressing a button underneath his desk. Right when he did, the wall opened up, revealing a hidden room. Milo gestures towards the door.

"Right this way!"

Without another word, the group runs inside. The friends found themselves on a mezzanine with a couple of people all hanging on the ground floor. Some were crafting at the crafting tables and furnaces available while others simply chill, talking with the other people there or playing board games.

It felt pretty cozy and safe. They were able to take a good breather now that they were hidden away from the guards. Zephyr however went back into hiding in Nikki's hair. He didn't want to accidentally cause a disturbance.

Milo stepped forward as the doors closed behind them. "This.. is the Build Club!" He declared.

"Whoa.." Petra gasped as she took a good look around.

"Everything you see before you was built from resources that my people have saved or.. er. obtained," Milo boasted.

"Man. Can't be easy to come by some of this stuff," Nikki figured, impressed. "Nice work."

"Right? This is quite the secret hideout!" Maggie beamed in excitement. She was happy to finally be somewhere interesting.

Milo cleared his throat, glancing at her. "It is not a 'hideout..' it's a Build Club," he corrected.

"Right.. still cool!"

"So are you the leader of this little resistance?" Jesse asked curiously.

Milo nodded his head. "Yes, I suppose you could say that," he confirmed. "You've caught on early, my friend."



"Yeah. I'm glad to see some sort of resistance against this dictatorship," Jesse admitted with a grin. He then cringed. "I wouldn't know what I'd do if I was the one living here."

Milo smiles sadly. "Yes.. You see, one day a long time ago.. I was just a citizen of Sky City, like any other. I wanted to make a community garden, so I put in a petition for some dirt blocks and, mercy me, it was granted!" He then turns his back on them, a wave of rage and sadness washing over him. "But in my excitement and haste to build my garden, I accidentally dropped my new block and it fell.. right over the edge! For my crime, I was tossed into the Founder's dungeons. And I was in there for a very, very long time.."

The gang exchanged shocked and sympathizing expressions. Being thrown in jail for months is a terrible thing to go through. Nikki even felt her hatred for their leader rise even more. "Wait, you dropped dirt. That was the crime?" She asked, exasperated.

"Seems pretty extreme, dude," Maggie said as she crossed her arms.

"Yeah, it was an accident!" Jesse agreed. "They can't lock you up for that, can they?"

"Oh, but they can. It was deemed an 'Egregious Wasting of Resources,'" he sighed. He then walks towards the railings of the mezzanine. You see, in our world, when something falls over the edge, it is gone. Forever. But when I was in that prison, I realized something: just because building is risky, it doesn't mean that no one should do it! That means no one ever learns!" He then led them down the stairs. "If only I had known you were builders sooner I would have

helped you all escape when I first met you, rather than let your friends be taken.. But at least you are here, yes?"

"I would like to save Jess and Lukas. And.. Ivor. I guess," Petra admitted with a sigh.

"And it would be nice to see Mini again.." Maggie added, worried.

"Yeah, I hope they're okay.." Nikki sighed.

Jesse felt extremely worried for his friends and sister as well. The idea of his sister in jail for something as little as building a bridge brought deep concern. He tried to push his thoughts to the side as he thought of what to do. When he did, he remembered one important detail. "You said something before about having a plan?" He recalled. "A different way into the palace to save our friends?"

"Yes, I did say that-." Milo said but was interrupted when someone called for him. The group turns around to see some of the rebels approaching them, eyeing them judgingly. Milo was a little nervous but he still tried to act cool. "Ah, hello, my friends."

"Bringing in outsiders? Seriously?" Complained one of his friends, clearly unhappy.

"Pretty hard to keep this a SECRET Club if you just keep bringing people in," another agreed, this one being a woman. Everyone agreed, talking over each other as Milo tried to calm everyone down.

Thinking fast, Nikki stepped up. "Guys, don't worry, we're builders just like you!" She said, finding a quick response. Everyone talked talking, staring down at her with judgement and uncertainty.

Jesse noticed this and quickly thought of response to back up his sister. "Yeah, my sister's right. Just keep calm. We're the ones who built that bridge into town today," he confirmed.

Jesse hoped that this would win their trust, however this didn't at all calm everyone's nerves. In fact, it did the exact opposite. They all looked shocked and nervous and the gang, including Milo was surprised by their reactions.

"Milo, are you kidding me? The most wanted criminals in the whole city?!" A lady shuddered. "We gotta turn them in before the guards break our door down!" Everyone else nodded and responded in agreement.

"Well, no, let's not do that.." Petra said nervously.

Milo felt embarrassed by how his friends were acting. He continued to try and ease the tension however. "I assure you, harboring them is worth the risk!" He coaxed. "They are the epitome of Build Club material!"

The people then huddled around and began whispering to each other. The gang and Milo took there nervously until they made their decision, one of them stepping forward. "Alright then. If Milo says you're these 'amazing builders..' Prove it," he challenged.

"Yeah! Better build something rad!" Another added.

Milo frowned at this. He greatly disliked how rude his friends were being, especially considering their circumstances. "Now see here, this is all highly disrespectful to my guests. I'm the leader here!" He scolded.

"It's okay, Milo. We got this," Nikki huffed. "I think I know our way around a crafting table better than any of you chumps!"

"Ooh, cocky. Let's see if you can back that up," the same man who stepped up huffed.

Milo felt nervous about all this but if it would help his friends trust them, then he was willing to take the risk. He led them up a small flight of stairs and onto a platform, where a crafting table was. Petra however stayed at the ground floor. Since she wasn't the best builder, she decided to just watch.

"We don't know many recipes, so if you just show us something that they build where you come from.." Milo instructed distinctly.

"You're going to be just fine, guys. I believe in you!" Petra smiled, trying to be encouraging but it didn't hide her nervousness. Jesse gave her a small smile in return, feeling his face heating up slightly.

"Yeah, what she said! Show these people who's boss!" Maggie added with a grin.

As she spoke, Milo handed them a couple of iron ingots and blocks. "It took us many weeks to scrape together this inventory. Please, use them for your build," he said.

"Oh, thanks Milo!" Nikki replied.

The blonde then stepped off the platform, everyone in the room eyeing them, waiting for them to build. When they began to grow impatient, they began to chant. "Build! Build! Build!" They repeated. Despite this, this only increased the siblings anxiousness as they were unsure of what to build.

Maggie was just about to head down the stairs to allow them room to build, but she halted when she noticed their hesitation. "Overwhelmed?" She asked.

"No. It's just.. there's a lot of things we can build," Jesse sighed with a sigh. "I'm not even sure if it's enough to impress everyone here.."

"Yeah. I'm all out of ideas too," Nikki frowned.

Maggie felt sympathy waving over her as she frowned. She understood how they felt, especially with all the pressure on them. She wasn't big on building, but she figured she should at least try to help. "Unfortunately, I'm not the best builder so I'm probably not the one to ask but from what I've noticed, people are most impressed by something scary! It causes a huge reaction," she advised. "Or something they haven't seen before." To be honest, she wasn't sure if what she was saying was actually helpful, but she hoped it would lead them in the right direction.

Jesse remembered using those same rules last year when they were coming up an idea for what they should build at EnderCon. He wasn't there when they were crowned the winners, but Axel's idea to build a creeper DID worked like a charm. "..yeah.. that kind of reminds me of that Creeper statue we built last year at the EnderCon building competition," he recalled.

Maggie's eyes shot wide. "You guys built a creeper-?!" She gasped, impressed.

"Yeah! It had fireworks coming from behind it and everything!" Nikki remembered, smiling. It brought her nostalgia to think about the creeper statue. She would never forget her first EnderCon. Her smile then faded slightly. "I would love to show you but the WitherStorm destroyed it."

Maggie giggled. "You guys never fail to surprise me," she grinned. "Whatever you guys decide to build, I'm sure it'll be amazing." She then stepped off the stage to give them some time to brainstorm some ideas for what to build.

Jesse thought vigorously about what Maggie said. A huge reaction would definitely be enough to earn the trust and respect of all the rebels here and it'll be one step closer to saving his sister and the others who were trapped inside the palace. Suddenly, something clicked. He remembered the pumpkin head he found back during his first visit to the Temple. Could that be help?

His thoughts were interrupted as he heard a familiar squeak. He peered around towards its source, spotting Zephyr gliding around something. Normally, he'd scold him and tell him to get back into hiding but he was much too focused on what he was circling around.

It was two iron blocks, one stacked on top of the other. It stood right behind them on the platform. Suddenly, an idea popped into Jesse's mind that might actually be good..

"Thanks for the encouragement, Zeph," Nikki scoffed playfully, the little EnderBat fluttering back onto her shoulder.

Jesse gazed down at his younger sister. "Nikki, remember that pumpkin I found at the temple? I think I found something useful for it!" He beamed. He didn't need to elaborate any further, Nikki's eyes widening as she realized what he wanted to do. She nodded at once and without another word, they began to start working.

Nikki placed two iron blocks on opposite sides of the one on top. Once she is done, she backs away as Jesse then places the pumpkin in the middle. Almost immediately, the stucture began to convulse. Jesse stepped to the side quickly as the blocks merged together, giving birth to an Iron Golem.

Everyone around the room all screamed and cowered in fear as they stared at the large, iron creature with green vines hanging off some parts of it. Some person even fainted. The only people in the crowd who weren't afraid were Maggie and Petra, who were both smirking triumphantly.



"Sweet mercy! Jesse! Nikki! What IS that thing?!" Milo cried. "Is.. is it safe?"

Jesse ran right up next to the Iron Golem, trying to calm everyone down. "Everyone! Everyone, please! It's not as bad as it looks," he coaxed.

"B-B-But that monster. It wants to eat us!"

Nikki tried to hold in her laughter but instead tried to keep a professional demeanor. "No, no, it won't hurt anyone. It's totally tame," she assured them. The Golem calmly walked down the platform, everyone eyeing it carefully. They watched as the iron beast gaze at them for a moment before wandering to another side of the room.

Maggie was cackling at their reactions. "Ha! That was PRICELESS!" She giggled. The gang shared the same amused expressions as everyone else began to finally calm from their previous frightened demeanors.

"I can understand why the guards are after you. I mean, that was awesome!" A woman said, amazed. She shouted a little out of breath, indicating that she was still a little freaked out.

"Right? I told you!" Milo boasted with a proud grin as he stood by the gang.

"Yeah, we're really sorry," another person apologized. "Wowzers.." Right when he did, everyone else began apologizing as well, all feeling guilty for their harsh judgment of them prior.

"Hey, these things happen. Apologies totally accepted, dudes," Jesse assured them, smiling in relief. Finally, they earned their trust and are a step closer to saving his sister and friends still trapped inside.

"Yeah 'dudes,'" Nikki said skeptically, raising an eyebrow. Her expression quickly turned serious as she faced the crowd. "Now uh, how about that whole 'getting us into the palace' thing?"

"Yeah, that would be great," Petra said.

"Ah, yes. Of course, of course. That is, after all, why you are here. I must say, though.." Milo began, the team sharing skeptical expressions as he went on. "After seeing you in action.. Your skills are even more impressive than I could have imagined." He turned his back on them, his eyes narrowing slightly. "So impressive that I wonder if I could implore you for a tiny favor."

The group all frowned, all of them seeming unsure. This wasn't part of their deal. They thought they would just get their friends, potentially find out where the Eversource was and bring Aiden to justice.

Maggie stepped up, staring at him curiously. "What kind of favor?" She queried.

Milo turned around, taking a quick glimpse at them for a moment as he walked towards the other side of the room, making sure to not go too far so they could still hear him. "I help you get into the palace, you help me steal the Eversource for my people," he said. He turned his attention towards his friends, raising his hand up. "Unlimited resources for everyone!" His friends all began to cheer, excited at the idea of freedom.

Jesse, Nikki and Petra all shared nervous expressions. Should they accept the offer? Maggie however was the only one who had a weirdly calm, almost serious expression.

"Okay, but my sister and my friends are in trouble in there," Jesse said, reminding him of their main goal. "So if we're breaking into the palace, we're going to save them first."

"This is an acceptable, and noble, arrangement," Milo grinned.

"Good," Petra sighed.

"Now. As for how to get INTO the palace.." the blonde rebel continued. "According to my informants, the Founder keeps the Eversource behind a secret door located in her throne room."

"Dramatic," Nikki commented.

Milo paid her no mind as he continued. "Every night, the Founder leaves guards at every door.. but there's a single window at the back of the palace that is left unguarded." He frowned. "It's an almost perfect point of entry. But.. It is far too high. If we can find a way through that window, the Eversource would be practically within our grasp!"

Jesse and Petra shared confident smiles. This would be easier than they thought. "Guys, how high doesn't matter," Jesse said, walking back onto the platform.

"What?"

"You just have to start thinking like real builders and craft a solution!" The brunette elaborated, folding his arms over his chest.

Zephyr flew off Nikki's shoulder, circling around a banner that depicted a ladder on it. Nikki grinned when she spotted it. "Zeph's right," she said. Like a ladder."

Milo stepped onto the platform, handing Jesse a couple of sticks. "If you could show us how to craft something that would reach the window.. we could get this heist underway!" He vowed. He stepped back onto the main floor, giving Jesse some space to work with.

The siblings grinned at each other before Jesse began working; putting the sticks in a sort of 'H' shape. Once he was finished, the sticks merged together, forming a ladder. Once it was crafted, he held it up for everybody to do. They all rejoiced, showing their support and gratitude.

"Yes. Of course. It seems so simple now!" Milo beamed. His expression softened as he gazed at the siblings. "All four of you. You are one of us. We will never forget this day!" As everyone continued to cheer, a familiar voice spoke up, silencing everyone.

"It's not enough.." it said.

Everyone stopped cheering and clapping, gazing at the source of the voice in confusion. It came from Maggie. She had her arms crossed, eyes closed and her head lowered, her bangs falling over her face.

"What..?" Milo stuttered, both perplexed and curious as to what she's talking about.

"It's not enough! If you just steal the Eversource, the Founder will have no problem hunting you down," Maggie elaborated, stepping forward. "We need a REAL solution."

Judging by her serious demeanor, Nikki knew she wasn't kidding. It almost frightened her since she was so used to her being more mischievous and smiley. "What do we suggest we do, Mags?" She asked slowly.

Maggie climbed onto the platform as she began to speak. "You guys want freedom to build, but the Founder won't grant you that promise. Well, we can. And I know how," she declared. "The Founder has you guys cooped up in here with little freedom and extremely harsh consequences. I bet there's people out there who are starving because they can't craft or find their own food to support themselves and their families." She gazed over at Milo, the two meeting eye contact.

"What we need is change. A REAL change. The Founder won't listen unless she hears the disappointment and anger of the people."

Jesse frowned, not liking what she was saying. Of course, he supported the freedom the people of SkyCity longed for, but it wasn't their business to interfere. "Maggie.. are you saying we should start a riot?" He asked, his cocoa brown eyes narrowing in concern.

"We don't just start a riot, Jesse.." Maggie corrected. "We start a Revolution!" She once again gazed at Milo, stepping down from the platform. "From what I've heard and seen, the people could be powerful enough to overthrow the government. In this case a dictatorship." Everyone's eyes widened as she continued. "The guards wouldn't know what to do if the entire town worked together. If we overthrow the government and the Founder, unlimited freedom will be yours!"

Everyone around the room immediately erupted in cheers, many of them chanting 'freedom.' Her friends however were still unsure of this. Jesse approached the young girl, hoping to make some sort of agreement. "Maggie, I understand your frustration but we need to help our friends first," he reminded her. "That's still the plan!"

"Of course it is, but I'm tired of sitting around as people get treated unfairly," she deflected, turning around to face him. "Building should be a basic right, not a privilege limited by rules!" She then faced the crowd once more. "Is everyone with me?!" The crowd, including Milo all applauded, showing their full support. Despite this, the gang was still a little bit nervous.

Milo went up beside Maggie as he faced the crowd. "It's time for a new era of SkyCity.." he announced. The praises increased by this, some even saying 'down with the Founder.' The gang was still unsure about this, especially Jesse but they didn't protest as Maggie started to explain her plan.

⌚»★«⌚ Chapter 4: Captured.. ⌚»★«⌚

Jess, Lukas, Ivor and Mini were escorted to the Throne Room. They had to wait in the detention room for an hour or so because the Founder 'had important business to take to' but finally, they were being taken to the leader herself.

When they entered the Throne Room, the first thing they noticed was how lavish and spacey it was. Mini would even argue that it looked way more extravagant than Redstonia. Jess loved the beautiful architecture but her mind was too focused on their missions. Lukas however could barely focus, trying his best to not focus too much on his former friends.

The Founder sat upon her throne, guards keeping watch as they were fought forward. Unfortunately, the Blaze Rods were also there and the gang all scowled when they spotted them.

"For your service to Sky City. I grant you these gifts," the Founder smiled. The gang watched as a guard, who was standing in front of a lever, flickering it. This powered some redstone that was on the floor, an iron door opening. A couple of minecarts emerging out of the door on rails. Ivor grins when he sees it.

"There, see? That minecart she summoned," the brewer beamed, trying to keep his voice low. "It must lead to the Eversource!"

Lukas huffed at Ivor's enthusiasm. After all this time, he was still worried about that Eversource? "Really? That's what you're focusing on?" He scolded. "I'd say we have bigger problems on our hands, like Aiden." He gestured towards Aiden, who had a large, almost friendly grin spread across his face. "Look at him, all friendly with the Founder. That's bad news."



"Lukas is right. We need to figure out what Aiden is up to, so we can stop him," Jess said, agreeing with the blonde. "That's what we need to stay focused on."

"I've got the feeling I already know what 'Aiden'" is up to.." Mini whispered, frowning. Despite their dire situation, she hoped that somehow, they would get lucky and whatever she believed was going to happen would dissipate.

The gang didn't speak another word, watching as the Blaze Rods collected a couple carrots handed to them from the minecarts. "Take your reward and enjoy the bounty of SkyCity's generosity," the Founder said generously.

Maya wasn't happy with what they got. "Carrots? Really?" She complained, disappointed. "You gotta be-." She was interrupted when Aiden nudged her, glaring at her to stay silent. She frowned, her eyes showing fear for a split second as her leader began to speak. "We are honored, wonderful Founder," he said, giving her a fake, warm smile.

The Founder once again gave them a small smile. "Of course. Now go! I have criminals to deal with," she said, her smile fading as she glared down at the 'criminals' in front of her.

The Blaze Rods snicker as they walked past them. As they did, Aiden stepped by Lukas, his eyes flashing in fury. "Good luck, Lukas. I hope you enjoy being doomed," he said, keeping his voice at a low whisper.

Lukas' eyes widened slightly, not expecting this at all, however he stood his ground. He was tired of being pushed around by Aiden and he was not about to let it continue. "If you think

you're going to get away with this, Aiden then think again," he vowed. His ocean blue eyes made intense eye contact with his fern green ones. "Justice will soon follow you."

Aiden scoffed at this. "Oh really? I can't wait to see when that happens," he scoffed. His eyes then narrowed. Lukas could've sworn he seemed.. sad. "You could've had this chance of victory, Lukas but of course you'd choose that bitch, Jesse's side." He then let out a forced sigh. "What else can I expect from a loser like you?"

Jess was furious by what he was saying. After all this time, after everything Lukas has done to at least try to be a good friend, he still decided to act like this. She began to regret letting him go out by himself to look for his friends. "Do not speak to him like that!" She raged, struggling to keep her voice low. "If you think for a second that I'll let you get away with all you've done then you're mistaken. You're going down and we're going to stop you."

Aiden scowled. In a fit of rage, he grabs her arm and squeezes it tightly. Jess, not expecting this whimpered slightly, trying to push him away as pain erupted in her arm. Aiden's grip remained strong and he leaned in to whisper in her ear. Despite this, the entire gang could hear what he's saying. "Not this time, Jess," he hissed. "I know for a fact that big brother will come running to save you but I assure you, as soon as he does, his days of playing hero will be over. Permanently." His eyes lit up in flames as he glared at her. "And that goes for all of you."

Lukas was shocked to see what he was doing, but his surprise quickly subsided to rage as he shoved him away. "Get away from her, you monster!" He chastised. Maya and Gill shared frightened expressions as they watched, seeming just as surprised by what he did.

Aiden stumbled a little after Lukas shoved him away. When he noticed his former friend wrapping an arm around Jess to comfort her, he felt his anger rise like an inferno burning down a forest. He tried to remain calm however, gazing over at the Founder talking to one of the guards before gazing at Lukas.

"You still have a chance to join the right side, Lukas," he coaxed. He waited for an answer but when he didn't get any, he huffed. "Fine. Suit yourself." He then stormed off, Maya and Gill trailing behind him like little puppies following their mother. As they leave, Aiden shoves Reginald out of the way. "Outta my way, Reggie!"

Reginald stumbled a little, scowling at Aiden as he stormed through the doors. "It's Reginald," he corrected, annoyed. When he noticed that the Founder was finished speaking to the guard, he walked by the Founder's side. "Come on, criminals. Time to see the Founder."

Right on his cue, the gang was shoved forward. The Founder stared at them in silence. Jess felt intimidated as she did, trying her best to not meet her cold gaze. Finally, she spoke. "Jess and accomplices. You have committed acts of wanton and illegal building, something specifically forbidden by our laws," she said, listing their 'crime.' "Explain yourself."

"This could still turn out okay," Ivor huffed in a whisper.

"Are you kidding? She does NOT sound friendly," Lukas scolded.

"Founder, ma'am, you gotta believe me. I'm not the bad guy here!" Jess replied, stepping up. She tried her best to keep her voice steady. If they did or say one bad thing, it might cost them everything. "Aiden's the one you should be worried about!"

"Oh really?" The Founder challenged.

"Yes really! With all due respect, I didn't know it was against the law when we started to build!" Jess pleaded. "None of us did! We were stranded! What were we supposed to do?"

She hoped this would convince the Founder to go easy on them but she was mistaken.

"Ignorance is bliss but it won't get you any favors," she chided. "Aiden told me all about you and your siblings, Jess. About how you're all tyrants back home. About how you and your Order of the Stone steal all the world's treasures for yourself." The gang's eyes shot wide at this accusation. "About how you're here to steal the Eversource from my city. A terrible act of treason."

"Founder, ma'am, that's actually not what the Order of the Stone does. Yes, we collect treasure, but we helped save the whole world!

We're not tyrants, or thieves!" The brunette tried to reason. "Aiden's got that all wrong."

"Really?"

Lukas was the next to step up. "I know this isn't my place to talk, but I must say something," he sighed. "Aiden is a master manipulator. I have.. many personal experiences with him. He'd say anything to get his hands on the Eversource."

The Founder still wasn't too convinced. "Much like you would seem to be doing right now," she huffed.

"No, we're trying to warn you before Aiden gets his hands on the Eversource," Jess corrected, standing by her friend. "It's clear that he's trying to set us all up, don't you see? There's no telling what he's planning to do."

The Founder closed her eyes shut and began to ponder. There could be a chance that somehow, Aiden's true intentions was to steal the Eversource, but she wasn't too keen on trusting these outsiders. After a moment, she stood up from her throne.

"Jess, it's clear that you're the little ring-leader, so how about you come with me?" She said, gesturing for the brunette to follow her as she began to make her way outside.

"Um, okay..?" Jess said awkwardly, wondering what she was trying to do. She stood there, perplexed until a guard pushed her forward. She scowled but she didn't protest as she walked out the open exit by the throne.

"I guess we'll just wait here then," Mini commented, crossing her arms. She and Ivor didn't seem happy with this, Mini placing her hands on her hips as Ivor folded his arms.

Jess felt a gentle breeze hit her as she exited the Throne Room, entering what seemed to be a garden. She noticed the Founder standing by the edge of the floating island and hastily made her way over to her. She took this time to gaze at the empty sky beneath them. The empty, lifeless sky. Silence loomed over them for a moment before the Founder finally began to speak.



"Tell me what you see," she instructed in a low, monotone voice.

Jess was puzzled by this but decided to answer anyway. "I don't see anything," she replied. "It's just.. empty."

"Precisely. As you can see, nothing exists below us. Only the Void," she revealed. She walked a couple feet

away from her, turning her back against her. She remained silent for a moment before continuing. "Resources - every kind - are incredibly precious." She took out cobblestone, holding it over the edge.

"And when something falls.." she let go of the block. It fell through a cloud, disappearing. "It is gone, forever. It is why building only happens when I dictate it. People only receive materials when I allow it. Otherwise.." She gazes at her with sad eyes. "We would collapse back into chaos. It is my duty to keep my people safe, and the only way I can do that is if our laws are obeyed."

Jess felt her frustration with her subside being replaced with sympathy. "Well, yeah. But you've got the Eversource, right? Can't you just use that to make more materials?" She suggested.

The Founder shook her head. "It is not that simple.." she sighed. She once again turned her back against her. "People act as though I want things to be this way.. allocating the limited resources.. risking my life every day.."

Jess was puzzled as to what she meant. Isn't the Eversource supposed to give unlimited resources? Why would they have trouble keeping any? "Wait, what do you mean by 'limited?'" She questioned. "I heard the Eversource could make 'unlimited precious materials.'"

The Founder sighed once more, taking a glimpse at her. "If only it were so simple.." she murmured. She then climbed up some of the stairs that lead back to the Throne Room, standing in front of the entrance. Jess followed behind her. "I'll have you know that before I found the Eversource, this world was nothing more than a cluster of pathetic islands in the sky." She turned around to face her. Jess could see the stress in her eyes. "I do this for my people. If I didn't, things would go back to how they were before. That is.. why I do what I do."

Jess felt extremely sympathetic for the lone ruler. At first, she viewed her as a harsh dictator but.. seeing how hard she work to prevent chaos from erupting and how stressful the job really was.. finally, she was starting to understand.

"But you don't need to do it alone. We could help you. We could work together," she encouraged, giving her a small, assuring smile.

The Founder was surprised by this, but also flattered. She wasn't expecting this kind of reaction from some evil criminal. "Being the leader of this city.. It is a tiring burden.." she sighed. For a moment, she felt like she could trust her, that they would be able to work together somehow. She then shook her head, clearing her head from such thoughts. This was reality. And no matter how much she disliked it, things had to be this way. "But no. This is my city, these are my people.. and it is my responsibility. I think I've heard quite enough."

Before Jess could say anything else, she signaled her to follow her back inside the Throne Room. The guard followed, pushing Jess along. She was annoyed by it, but now she was hopeful that the Founder wouldn't punish them. Once they walked back inside, Jess joined the rest of her team while the Founder sat back on her throne.

Ivor was pleased to see that they had finally returned. They all sat in awkward silence up until they returned. "Good," he huffed. "Now that you're back, we can talk properly-."

"Reginald? I've made my decision," the Founder said, unintentionally interrupting him. "While I'm not convinced that you are here to steal the Eversource, the fact remains that you constructed a bridge of dirt without authorization." Her eyes narrowed slightly. "That is why you and your companions are to be detained until I can discern the full truth of the matter or at least until we find your other companions." Jess' smile faded as the gang gasped in shock. "Reginald, please remove them."

Reginald salutes. "Yes ma'am," he said, ordering the guards to go through with the Founder's wishes.

"What-?!" Lukas yelled. Multiple guards grabbed them, escorting them out of the Throne Room. Jess however managed to break free from the guards' grasps, trying to run up to the leader to try and reason with her once more. Unfortunately, a guard threw their arm in front of her, stopping her.

"Oh, come on! This isn't fair! I wanted to help you! Don't do this!" She demurred.

The Founder closed her eyes, bowing her head. "I'm afraid this is the way it has to be," she imparted.

Before she could protest any further, Reginald stepped in and gently pulled her over, escorting her out of the throne room. When he noticed her disappointed expression, he did his best to console her. "Sorry, outsiders. Founder's orders," he said. "No changing her mind now." This did nothing to raise her spirits and instead, she felt even worse.

⌚★⌚ Chapter 5: In The Dungeon ⌚★⌚

The party of four were taken to their prison cell. Once arriving, they had their items confiscated. The cell itself was very spacey, enough space for all of them but it didn't seem too sanitary. This didn't sit well with Lukas as he leaned against the wall. He hated the thought of being held prisoner, even more so in such an unsanitary place.

Ivor sat on the dusty old bed while Jess and Mini simply sat on the floor. The entire team was silent. So quiet that they could hear the sounds of water dripping and rats scurrying around for food.

Lukas felt himself dozing off, his mind enough to fill an entire ocean. The only thing on his mind was Aiden. Why.. Why did things have to end up this way? Just a year ago, they were friends. They hung out, talked and they were a team. Then the WitherStorm happens and suddenly, things never felt the same way again. Lukas wondered.. what could've been different to prevent any of this?

Trying to distract himself, he gazed over at Mini and Ivor. They seem to be holding up well. He then gazed over at Jess. Remembering Aiden's threat and his attempt to hurt her, he piped up against the wall he was previously leaning on, sitting down beside her. He felt himself cringing as he sat on the dirty stone floors.

"Hey. How you're holding up..?" He inquired.

"Could be better, but I'll be fine," Jess assured him. She then glanced over at him, her dark eyes showing great concern. "'What about you? How are you holding up-?"



Lukas wanted to say he was fine. He didn't want to turn the mission on him, yet.. he couldn't bring out the right words. "I.. I don't know.." he sighed. "I'm sorry.."

Jess' eyes widened in surprise when he apologized. "Don't apologize, Lukas. None of this is your fault," she frowned, scooting closer to him.

"Yeah, Blonde. We'll find a way out of this," Mini added. "Somehow." She had been eavesdropping on the conversation and felt sympathetic towards the blonde. She didn't know a lot about him, yet the thought of her old friends turning against her didn't sit well with her.

"I don't mean to sound nosy but I sense you and that 'Aiden' fellow have a history," Ivor guessed, the three of them turning their attention to him as he spoke.

Lukas sighed, bowing his head. "..Yeah.. a very mixed one at that. I'm just surprised by how low he's steeping down to," he admitted. He couldn't believe this was the same guy he grew up with. He then lifted his gaze, turning his attention towards Jess. "Jess, I-.. I know what you might say. Aiden was my friend. I need to try and talk to him."

Jess, who was previously slouching, sat up. Her expression was serious and sympathetic. "No, he's crazy and he needs to be taken down," she corrected. She's had enough with giving chances. No matter how many chances she gave, Aiden will still remain the same. Lukas was surprised by this however, he let out a sigh of relief, some of the weight being lifted off his shoulders.

"That's something we can definitely agree on," Mini huffed, pulling herself off the ground.

"He's right about one thing though. Jesse and the others are definitely coming soon," Ivor reminded them. "If we don't do something. Aiden would have them cornered!" Knowing Jesse and Nikki, they're probably doing all they can to sneak inside the palace to save them. That'll be the perfect chance for Aiden to strike. It's a flawless plan.

As soon as Jess was reminded by it, she grumbled under her breath, her eyes now filled with rage. "It'll be a cold day in the Nether before I'll ever let him lay a finger on my brother. Aiden will get what's coming to him and once he does, he'll be sorry," she vowed sharply. Even Ivor felt slightly intimidated by her tone.

Suddenly, it broke when Mini let out a soft chuckle. The three gaze over at her in confusion, wondering what was so funny. When she noticed this, she raised her arms up in defense in a playful manner. "Sorry! I've never seen this side of you. I like it," she grinned.

Jess rolls her eyes playfully, smiling. Lukas cracked a small smile as well. It.. felt nice to smile after all this time. Silence loomed over the room once more as no one else dared to speak. Lukas took a quick glimpse at Jess, gently wrapping his arm around her, having intentions to give her a side hug. Jess was caught off guard by this but she didn't mind. She scooted closer to him, resting her head on his shoulder.

Lukas didn't expect this and felt as his heart fluttered, his smile widening as he began to carefully brush his fingers through her curls. She felt so.. peaceful and her curls framed her face beautifully. Her eyes were so.. mesmerizing that he felt like he lost himself whenever he looked into them. For a moment, he forgot the stress he was previously feeling..

The peacefulness didn't last long. The silence was interrupted by sudden humming. Jess lifted her head, noticing Reginald outside their cell going through their stuff. She huffed, her eyes narrowing slightly in annoyance.

"You guys have some really fascinating stuff here," the leader of the royal guard said, impressed.

"Hey, you already locked us up. Did you really need to confiscate our stuff, too?" Mini scolded, going by the bars and placing her hands against the bars.

Reginald gazed at her, raising an eyebrow. "Well, it wouldn't be much of a jail if I let you keep your stuff," he replied. Mini scowled, crossing her arms as Jess rolled her eyes, shaking her head. Reginald then pulls out a block of sand, staring at it in awe. "Oh, wow.. what is this?" He holds out the block for them to see as he approaches their cell.

Lukas stood, standing next to an irritated Mini. "That's.. mine..?" He said.

"It's almost like dirt.. but not?"

Jess was the next to stand, staring at him in confusion. "It's called sand. You've never seen sand before?" She pondered.

Reginald seemed even more impressed as he inspected the block. "'Sand.' Wow," he echoed. "What's it do?"

Ivor scowled. "Are you kidding me? We are not going to explain SAND to the guy locking us behind bars," he spat. "I refuse!"

Reginald frowned at his rudeness. "Well, whatever it does, it's going in the chest with everything else," he said. He turns around, heading back to the chests to place it back inside. This only fueled Ivor's and Mini's annoyance further.

"This is just embarrassing," Mini chided. "Nothing sadder than some unimportant, irrelevant man on the world's tiniest power trip."

This struck Reginald's last nerve. He slams the chest shut and storms towards their cell, his eyes narrowed in fury. "Hey, I don't have to take this. I'm in charge here. You're criminals," he condemned. "Aiden told everyone all about how horrible you are." He walks a few feet away from them, his back now turning towards them as he continues to rant. "He said that you burn down trees, just for fun. That you steal all the world's treasures and hoard them for yourself. He also said that you tame wild animals.. just so you can make them chase innocent people!"

Jess gazed over at Lukas. He gave her a gentle nod, which prompted her to run up to the guard to try and win his trust. "Does this look like the face of a horrible criminal?" She asked, giving him a sad, pleading smile. Reginald stares at her for a moment before gazing at the rest of her friends. Besides Ivor's and Mini's obvious annoyance, he could tell how desperate they were.

"Well.. no.. I suppose you don't seem that way, now that I meet you," he admitted. He then lets out a deep sigh as he frowns. He wanted to trust them but he couldn't bring himself to break the rules just because he thought that these people may be right. "I'm sorry, but this is the way it has to be. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go help the Blaze Rods beef up security." He starts to head for the door, but he stops in his tracks, starting to scowl. Jess takes this chance to once again run towards him.

"Can't believe I'm taking orders from that sniveling little- ahem," he halted when he noticed her. "Stay here and don't cause any trouble. I'm sure you'll be very comfortable."

"Reginald, you've got to listen to me. Aiden tricked the Founder so that he could steal the Eversource for himself," Jess tried to reason, hoping that he would listen to her and do something. "There's not much time." When he noticed him hesitating, she went on. "You're the Captain of the Guard. If you don't think you can trust the Blaze Rods, you should listen to those instincts."



"They're personal guests of the Founder. And sure.. maybe I don't like them, but.. I'm probably just being.. paranoid.." he sighed.

"Reggie, listen. You've seen how they act. They're not good people! You know it! Why do you think they're sucking up to the Founder so much?"

"You fool! They want to get her guard down and then steal the Eversource!" Ivor scowled, saying what he believed Aiden is most likely planning.

"It's the oldest trick in the book!" Mini agreed.

Reginald stopped to process what they were saying. He always had a bad feeling about them. Everything about them; from their sudden appearance to the way they act.. it never gave him a good vibe. "That.. aw, geez.. you might have something, there. I dunno. Hm.." he murmured. Mini groaned slightly at this. After a moment of thinking, Reginald approaches their cell. "Okay, let's say you make a good point. And I'm not saying you do. But hypothetically.. why would I, the Captain of the Guard, let you, a criminal, out of that cell?"

"I'll never know how you looked at them and thought, 'There are some upstanding citizens!'" Ivor fumed.

Jess ignored him, instead answering Reginald's question. "Okay, maybe you don't like me very much. But tell me this.. who do you not like more? Me, or Aiden?" She challenged.

The royal guard captain doesn't answer, instead remaining quiet as he pondered on what to do. Freeing them would mean risking his job but if risking his job meant that the Eversource will remain safe, then the risk would be worth it. "'The enemy of my enemy is my friend. 'Huh," he figured, gazing at Jess, who gave him a gentle nod. He then heads back in the opposite direction, standing in front of a lever. "Hmm. Hm hm hm.. okay. Let's say I'm heading to the pantry to get you prisoners some bread. Do you.. do you see where I'm going with this?"

Jess grins. "And maybe, you'll forget to lock the door..?" She guessed.

Reginald grins before taking a quick look around to make sure no one was watching. He also made sure to listen in just in case someone were to walk by before flickering the lever. The iron doors flew open, allowing them to escape.

"Please, just get out of here. Get to the throne room and stop the Blaze Rods," he pleaded. He then leaves the dungeons, closing the doors behind him. Once he was gone, the gang happily left their cell, going to the chests to get their stuff.

"Ha! Nice work. Now, on to the Eversource!" Ivor beamed.

"You find new and creative ways to impress me," Mini grinned.

"Well, what can I say? I'm a people person," Jess giggled. "Now it's time to take Aiden down." She then opened the chests, digging through it to collect their items. Luckily, it wasn't a whole lot. It was just their weapons, potions, some sticks, cobblestone, iron, bread and sand.

As she collected their items, Lukas spoke. "I mean, I understand wanting to stop the Blaze Rods. But you still can't really want to steal the Eversource, can you?" He challenged. He was uncertain that stealing it would lead to any solution. Besides, the people of this entire island rely on it for resources. If they take it, they would die."

Jess closed the chest once she was finished looting it, placing her sword back in her inventory. "Honestly, I just don't want Aiden to get his hands on the Eversource," she replied. "So long as we stop him, that's what's important."

"Sounds good to me," the blonde agreed. "No way Aiden would do anything good if he had it."

Once they finished their conversation, Jess handed everyone back their stuff. "Now let's get going before Aiden does anything stupid. Knowing Jesse and Nikki, they're probably on their way here now," she urged.

Mini began to run towards the stairs, going in the opposite doors from where Reginald exited from. She knew where to go since she had an amazing memory and could recall the smallest things with ease. "Throne Room was back this way.." she recalled. The rest of the gang followed behind her. None of them knew what was in store for them, but whatever it was, they were ready to take Aiden down once and for all..

⌚»★«⌚ About the Author ⌚»★«⌚

Hello, I'm Isabella, Izzy for short! Just your average teen making fanfics about her favorite shows and stuff LOL. I'm in a shit ton of fandoms and I'm interested in starting new fanfics outside of MCSM.

This includes:

MCSM  (I will stay in the fandom until I die)

Avatar, the Last Airbender/Legend of Korra    

Heathers (mostly the movie)    

The Owl House 

Amphibia 

MLP 

Voltron 

Precure 

The Babysitters Club (graphic novels only) 

Winx Club  

Sofia the First (kinda) 

Ever After High 

Monster High 

Royale High 

Rainbow Magic  

The Ghost and Molly McGee 

I also ship a shit ton of stuff like McSawyer, Jesstra, Jetra, Lukesse, Sashannarcy, Lumity, Raeda, Huntlow, Klance, Rarijack, Flutterdash, Twipie + Sunset. A lot more that I'm too lazy to list lol. I also include OC's.. if that's fine with any of y'all, I love adding OC's   I hope y'all enjoy my stories and have a wonderful day:D

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